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## THE ALDINE.

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## MY ROUND TOWER IN THE WEST.

WHEN the wings of sunset hover  
On the purple hills of even,  
And the golden light looks backward  
To number the stars of heaven;  
When the heart of the whole world weary  
Turns dumbly to God for rest,  
As the reaper turns to his cottage,  
And the child to its mother's breast,  
I sit in the ruined casement  
Of my round tower in the west.

Slant splendors of oriels faded  
In mosaics dimly lie,  
And a banner of ivy signals  
To the black rooks sailing high;  
Strange suns to the turret creeping  
Beckon with fitful gleams,  
Till neither of morn or midnight  
The light in my casement seems;  
'Tis the glow of a haunted palace,  
Lighting the land of dreams!

An owl has flown to the rafters,  
And steadfastly gazes down  
On relic, and rust of armor,  
And dust of a kingly crown:  
There are whispers of wilding breezes,  
And glints of a sunny sky;  
Hope flings to the morn her tresses,  
And at noon love wanders by,  
But there dwell in the ivy shadows  
Only the owl and I.

He is priest of a tear-stained missal,  
And droneth a weird "To-whool!  
Memories rich and olden,  
Memories sweet for two!"  
Though gayer guests may grieve me,  
And snows lie down on the lea,  
Though summer friends flit homeward  
As the lark flies over the sea,  
And the smile of hope dissemble,  
Yet the owl is true to me.

He calls, and the voiceless pageant  
Of a vision glideth by—  
Faces of lords and ladies  
That in silent chambers lie;  
Bursts of forgotten music  
Winnow the waveless air;  
Ghosts of unquiet glory,  
Glimmer of jeweled hair,  
And the dawns and damps of ages  
Are wavering everywhere.

My friar in gray hath keeping  
Of lovelier things than these,  
Safe hid in a ruby casket,  
That opens to soundless keys:  
A ring from the hands that vanished  
Like snowflakes over the sea;  
An hour that gathered the perfume  
Of the sweetest things that be;  
These were nothing to another—  
They are all the world to me!

The owl is a rare magician;  
He locks in his sombre breast  
All secrets of things divinest:  
When day dies out of the west,  
He shows me the wee, round faces  
Framed in by a cottage wall,  
And the floss of tangled ringlets  
That on cottage pillows fall,  
And this, in my round tower olden,  
Is the tenderest dream of all.

If a pilgrim, worn and weary,  
Would fain in our palace lie,  
We spread him a royal banquet,  
My senechal gray and I;  
I sing to my lute in the casement  
Old songs that he deemeth best,  
And show him the moss and lichens  
Where the sunshine loves to rest,  
Till he half-forgets the shadows  
Of my round tower in the west.

When my dusky walls grow dreary,  
I follow some rover far  
Where the Crescent pales in splendor,  
Or watch by the clear North Star;  
In cathedrals grand and solemn  
The moonlight of marble gleams,  
And the Soul that stood by the masters  
Through choral and picture streams,  
Till the marvelous kings of story  
Arise in my land of dreams.

From old worlds waxing and waning  
To the worlds of time's gray dawn,  
A stately mirage is lifted  
As the caravan struggles on;  
I press for the shadow of palm-trees  
Stretching across the sands,  
Past pyramid piles of princes  
I flit through the hoary lands,  
And bow in a kindling glory  
Where the cross of Judea stands.

Sometimes I go from my casement  
Down into the human sea,  
With its waves in the sunlight lifting,  
And heavings of agony;  
In the swelling of mighty surges  
Crown jewels are lost and won;  
There are towers a gleam with signals  
For the good that must be done,  
And God keeps watch for the boatmen  
That sail to the setting sun.

Then a tangle of casques and lances  
Illumines the purple west,  
And the winds toss plume and favor,  
Each borne on a knightly crest;  
Right royally prance the squadrons  
As their pennons rise and fall,  
But it may be the steed that paceth  
Leaps first at the bugle call,  
And the knight that rideth plumeless  
Is the bravest knight of all.

One weareth a crimson token,  
Another a knot of blue;  
One battles for gain and glory,  
And one to be strong and true;  
If he wins when the foe is flying  
I fling a glove for his crest,—  
If he raiseth a woman failing,  
With a little one on her breast,  
I write his name in the casement  
Of my round tower in the west.

When the gloom of the combat deepens,  
I list for a bugle call,  
And my heart keeps watch for the colors  
Of the dearest knight of all;  
And oh! to stand when he wavers  
With true love's clearer sight,  
And oh! when my knight is fallen,  
To kiss his forehead white,  
To comfort him when he calleth,  
And bear him into the light!

The refrain of an old, old idyl,  
Still conquers the kings of war,  
And women will lean enchanted  
From the towers of faith afar;  
And because love's loss is sweeter  
Than its glory but half-confessed,  
You may know the brave knight found me  
In the dream I love the best,  
When the owl looks out from the casement  
Of my round tower in the west.

—Annie Herbert.

## A LITTLE FOOL.

FLORENCE REED was the little fool, and Julia Willis, her cousin, it was who called her so. You can judge between them if you like: it is a story that will not take long in the telling.

Florence—or Florry, for nobody ever dreamed of calling her any thing else—Florry Reed was not in the least what one would call a beauty; but then she had the softest eyes and the sweetest lips in the world. Something at least to that effect Charley Dennis had been heard to declare, and it is very much to be believed that he spoke as one who should know on this subject.

The two had been lovers for quite a while; lovers in the bud, as one may say, and everybody knows that the bud is the sweetest part of the whole blossom-season. The practical, common-place stage of declaration had not yet been reached; it was the time of broken hints and secret hand-pressures, of stolen kisses and general felicity. Florry walked on air, and forgot that it was not her native element, till one unlucky day the clouds melted under her feet, and let her down to earth again with a rude thump.

It was the day of a celebration given in Blackville to commemorate some event perfectly uninteresting to the world at large, but of the very last importance in the eyes of the Blackvillians. For, though Blackville was a little place, its inhabitants were men and women very much like other people, and measured the universe on the Blackville yardstick after the orthodox and proper fashion.

The festivity, beginning with an oration, ended with a pic-nic in a grove just outside the town, a magnificent maple grove, whose violet-scented solitudes it was almost a sin to profane with the clatter

of hardware and the popping of ginger-beer corks. Charley Dennis and Florry were there together, as they were together everywhere. But unfortunately for Florry, Miss Adela Brent was there also.

This young lady was not Blackville-born. She came from a much larger town, a town which would have turned up its nose very high indeed at poor little Blackville, had it happened to be aware of its existence at all. For which reason, the Blackvillians naturally looked with admiring awe upon it and all that pertained to it. Miss Adela, then, being a visitor just arrived among them, her *début* was an event second only to the great event commemorated by the day. She was not prettier than half their own girls there present, but she was wholly unlike them in dress and style: in a word, she was something new; and if novelty is one of the greatest of all charms anywhere, it certainly is not the least so in a small country town where a wholesome fear of his neighbor holds each in decent restraint. So all eyes were fastened on the stranger, when, at a rather late hour, she made her appearance on the ground, which in nowise discomposed her. She settled herself and her frouces, gave a final toss to the frizzy wilderness surmounting her little head, and, turning back her fan-parasol, looked around her with much the air with which a traveler, stranded among savages, might observe their barbarous customs.

The first of the natives on whom her glances chanced to rest, were Florry and Charley, and she vouchsafed them a prolonged examination, under which Florry's eyes fell and her color rose; whereupon Adela, who had already mentally inventoried her as pretty, but deplorably without style, regarded her anew, with amused compassion, as a girl who could actually blush for being looked at!

Charley did not blush, though. On the contrary, he returned the gaze with one which might have abashed some girls. But Miss Brent was a young lady not easily abashed, and if the very evident admiration in the handsome savage's black eyes affected her in any way, it was certainly neither to embarrass nor offend her. That was plain from the manner in which she received his advances later; else the two would not have made so rapid an acquaintance, nor have been missing when, by-and-by, a stroll through the grove was proposed, so that Florry was obliged to put up with the escort of her cousin Fred Willis, a necessity considerably more agreeable to him than to her.

Oh, what a cloudy ending for a day that had begun all sunshine! Florry wondered piteously, when the festival at an end, they drove back through the evening together, could this be the same Charley, who, on that very road, only a few hours before, had said—well, it was not so much *what* he had said as the way, and especially the look, with which he had said it,—could this be the same, this abstracted individual who had to keep rousing himself out of some reverie over—what? The charms of Miss Adela Brent? Florry greatly feared it.

Yes, that was it. New brooms sweep clean, and Miss Adela's frouces and frizzes had swept Charley quite away from his moorings. In a week, she could turn him round her little finger; in another, he had as completely deserted "the softest eyes and sweetest lips," as if that and many a like speech had been but empty air.

If Florry had been a heroine, she would probably have broken her heart; have taken to writing poetry and reducing her weight at the rate of a pound a day. But then she was not a bit of a heroine; an army of little brothers and sisters to attend to left her no time for poetry-writing, while Blackville, although, as before stated, an insignificant place, had a bracing mountain air which forced people to eat in spite of themselves. So Florry, occupied with small frocks and stockings, did not lose her pretty color or roundness, and if there were sometimes tears in the "softest eyes," and sighs on the "sweetest lips," why, that is only what is happening every day to eyes and lips that are neither soft nor sweet.

No, Florry had no notion of sitting for a picture of despair. She had a stout little heart of her own, as brave as it was warm, and whatever the trial, she "grinned and bore it,"—metaphorically speaking; Nature, in bestowing on her a pair of dimples, having put the grin sardonic out of her power. It was very hard, very provoking, very cruel of Charley, no doubt, but still it was Charley, and she was not going to make an outcry against him. That was Florry's way of looking at it; there are such people now and then in this medley of a world.